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Abstract –

Library Sprouts: Cultivating Innovative Partnerships for Early Learning

Library Sprouts: Growing through books and play! is a collaboration between Westville Library, Wanatah Library and PNW Center for Early Learning. This program model emerged from a community-identified need and has been developed through an academic service engagement project involving faculty, undergraduate teacher candidates, community partners and families.

The Library Sprouts family literacy program provides children, birth to age three, with a monthly story time. Oral language, vocabulary development, print awareness, book knowledge and positive interactions with literacy are emphasized. Designed and implemented by preservice teachers, Library Sprouts incorporates research-based strategies to foster family literacy and promote developmentally appropriate language and play experiences. Families are given a book to take home as well as resources to support children's learning.

A review of home and parent programs focused on literacy skills reveals a significant effect on children's oral language and general cognitive abilities (NELP, 2011, p. 205). Another study shows the "30 million word gap;" children in homes with a higher-income heard 30 million more words by the age of 4 than their peers from low-income homes (Neary, 2014). Children in homes with many books end up achieving three more years of school than their peers in homes without as many books regardless of the parents' education level (Evans, et al., 2010). The quality of the teacher is a contributing factor to children's growth and development. Undergraduate preservice candidates participating in Library Sprouts receive instruction and supervision to develop the requisite knowledge, skills and dispositions to encourage children's successful literacy learning.

KEYWORDS

child development;
community-based learning;
early childhood education;
family literacy;
library;
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service-learning.